



"PEACE" IN A BUSY CITY

by Sister Pat Free

Over the past eighteen months people have asked me the question—"What is it like being back in busy Sydney after the peace and quiet of work in a country parish?" And I must agree that the occasional trip to the city a couple of years ago certainly seemed like a confrontation with the proverbial "rat race."

Perhaps one would feel the strain but for the fact that my present position is in the pleasant and peaceful surroundings of the Parish of Hunter's Hill and Woolwich which is situated on a peninsula between the Lane Cove and Parramatta Rivers. Just about the only real disturbance is the noise of heavy lorries from a certain oil company in the Parish. From the wharf in Woolwich, a regular ferry service provides a pleasant trip to the city for workers and shoppers.

One of our Church Army mottoes since the early days has been, "Go for the worst," so one might easily ask the question—"How does a Church Army Officer fit into such an idyllic situation?". Activities for the week are similar to most other parish positions and involvement with young people seems to take up quite a few hours of my time. This is partly through our youth fellowship meetings on Friday evenings when an average of 100 young people congregate for varied activities, and again on Sunday evenings for the service and supper following.

Of these young people quite a number are involved in active service in the Parish. My work on Sunday mornings is shared with some of them who are among the nine teachers on my staff in the kindergarten department of one of our Sunday Schools. Our other teacher is a young mother who makes time to come and teach, as well as sending her own youngsters along.

On Sunday evenings at 6.00 p.m., up to 14 or 15 people (mostly youth) gather with me for an hour-long Bible study before adjourning to the church for evening worship. This is usually a

lively time of learning new truths and sharing experiences.

During the week scripture classes in schools are a part of the programme and again, more than half of my classes are comprised of young people in their teens. Recently I was approached by some school students with an invitation. They were not content with what they are getting from scripture classes and attendance at I.S.C.F. (Inter-School Christian Fellowship) meetings, both of which cater for the unbeliever and the seeker as well as those already having a living faith. So now about 15 to 20 of us meet every Monday at lunch-time for a Bible Study.

Before finishing, I want to ask a number of questions :

Why do so many young people attend meetings in a church hall when there are discotheques, clubs, shows and many other attractions?

Why are some young people so willing to give up most of a morning out of their recreation time, to come and teach children?

Why do people come along early to church (and maybe miss out on tea) in order to attend a Bible study?

Why are students wanting to crowd into an already busy school life, another lunch-time activity?

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that although the world has much to offer people—beautiful surroundings, wealth, enjoyable activities—none of these is ultimately satisfying.

I believe that I and many of these young people have discovered the truth of what our Lord said in John 14.27—

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you."



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The Green Valley Young Peoples' Choir.

ed from many miles north and south of Wollongong. It was a rousing modern hymn, "Christ is the Lord", led by the students complete with guitar and bongo drums; a short address by the Federal Secretary about the purpose of the Church Army and with reference to the work of the officers present. It was entertainment by talented soprano, Miss Audrey Worrall, and the delightful Young People's Choir from Green Valley, led by Captain Rex Harris. It was an excellent film "This is the

Church Army" about the work of the English Society where it all began, plus short but interesting accounts by two officers of their work in busy industrial and new housing areas of Wollongong and Sydney. Most of all, the Church Army Rally was an informative, enjoyable and happy evening shared by many Christians for the purpose of fostering interest in the work of the Society in Australia and of giving testimony to the joyous fact that—Christ IS the Lord.

All age groups enjoyed the programme.



A GOSPEL FOR TODAY

FAITH

To many people faith means "trying to believe in the impossible or improbable." Yet we exercise faith every day of our life and which ever way we turn. Nor is this faith confined to those whom we know, our own families and others of whom we can say, "I have learned to trust him." We trust systems and those who work them, whether it is the railway or the bus company, the Town Hall or Post Office, the map maker or the firm that packed the groceries into the cellophane packages. The whole fabric of civilization is founded on man's capacity to exercise reasonable faith.

Faith becomes shaken and in the end withdrawn if the object of our faith continually fails us. The shower-proof coat that lets in the lightest drizzle, the train that always runs late, or the girl-friend who repeatedly fails to keep a date causes us to lose faith in it or her as the case may be.

With civilization becoming ever more complex there are increasing areas where faith has to be exercised. Most of us have only a rudimentary idea of how our car works, or how the cooker or central heating system functions, still less the mysteries of the surgery or hospital. It is clear that life is increasingly more complicated and things have to be accepted "on Faith."

MASTER MACHINE

Now an odd thing seems to have happened. We have come to put greater faith in "things and gadgets" rather more readily than in people. Officialdom at times will hide behind the "infallible" computer . . . so your bill cannot be wrong! If the car goes wrong I blame the mechanic who last serviced it. The electric light switch is much more likely to give the desired response to my touch than is my neighbour to a request. All around human beings are "failing" and having psychiatric treatment. If I am familiar with a machine I know it will work, but not when I am dealing with the unpredictable quality called "human nature."

What is more I will trust a man when he is acting as a kind of official machine yet I may not trust him as a person. For instance, it could be that I know the man in the booking office selling railway tickets. In that capacity he will give me both the right ticket and the correct change, but in private life for all I know he might try to sell me a dud lawn-mower! The cheating is not the "ticket-selling-machine-man" but "Bill Bloggs."

ROAD TO DISASTER

Now this is where the Gospel for Today comes crashing in again, for we are ultimately concerned with relationships. There has to be trust between human beings and whenever there is a breakdown of trust disaster follows. The Bible makes it clear that we are our brother's keeper (Gen. 4. 9). The second great commandment is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Mark 12. 31). The mark of the followers of Jesus was the love they bore each other. (John 13.35).

Yet this capacity for utter devotion and love—which grows out of faith—is not given to people, except under exceptional circumstances. This is the argument advanced by St. Paul (Romans 5. 7). Just a few, he says, would dare to die for a good man but who would dare to die for people like us? Yet Christ died for "sinners" as we are so rightly called (and as we know ourselves to be even if we stupidly hope no one else realizes it!) Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15. 13). It may be very difficult for man to build up a relationship with man, but God Himself has built up a father-relationship with man through the Cross, so that we can become children of God.

Recently the British Army has, with considerable success, been trying to "keep the peace" between two factions in Ireland. In order to achieve this the two groups have had to be kept apart. It will be a still more onerous task to try and **make** peace.

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